

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO
SHOWING CUTTING
HORSES



CUTTING HORSE TRAINING ONLINE

Table of Contents

3 - What It's All About

Sport of Cutting Intro, Cutting Origins, Cattle Handling, Rules, Judging

4 - Getting Familiar With The NCHA & Affiliates

Understanding NCHA Classes and Exceptions, Finding Affiliate Clubs, Cutting Lingo

5 - Planning

Budgeting, Cutting Events Calendar

6 - What You'll Need

Bits, Saddles & Tack, Buying A Horse

7 - Training Essentials

Neck Reining, How To Ride A Cutter, Loping Basics

8 - Practice Tips & Show Prep

Working The Flag, Building Your Own Flag, Trailer & Equipment Checklist

9 - Final Advice

Clothing Rules, NCHA Beginner's Handbook, Study Tips

10 - Beginner's Checklist

Check off everything as you learn and prepare to show successfully

The Basics...

Want to get your heart pumping and nerves tingling with excitement? Just watch the grace and beauty of a cutting horse, or better yet -- ride one!



[Watch NCHA's The Sport Of Cutting Video](#)

► Understand the *objective* of the sport-know the *big picture* and what you are trying to achieve. CHTO has some excellent videos on this.

[Watch Chubby Turner on the Origins of Cutting](#)



[Watch Gabe Reynolds - Cattle Handling 101](#)

Judges Card...

► Be familiar with the Judge's Card - Take a picture of your score card and go watch your video, you will be able to re-live the run and see areas to improve, make notes and better understand WHY you were penalized.



[Copy of A Judge's Card](#)

Rules

► Know the NCHA Rules. Every new member to the NCHA receives a rule book . There are also excellent videos available on Cutting Horse Training Online on what judges look for.



[NCHA Rule Book](#)



[ACHA Rule Book](#)



The Most Important Rules For a Beginner:

1. [Hot Quit](#)
2. [Switch](#) (Rule #10)
3. [Deep Cut](#)
4. [Herd Work](#)

Cutting Lingo

► Know the cutting lingo. Cutting uses words and phrases that can be hard to nail down exactly what they mean unless you have made a point to ask such as cow-side foot, too flat, rate with cow, etc.



[Watch Train Rice Explain Those Cutting Terms](#)



[NCHA Glossary](#)



[How to read the Judge's card](#)

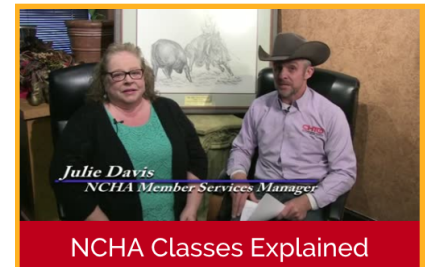
[Watch Morgan Cromer Explain The Judge's Card](#)



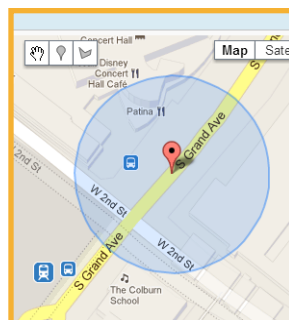
Get Familiar With The NCHA & Affiliates...

► Understand the various NCHA competition classes and rules governing them. Work out which is the best class for you and your horse. There is nothing worse than winning a class you later find out you were not eligible for.

[Watch NCHA Director of Member services Julie Davis explain the classes and rules governing them](#)



► Find out who your local cutting affiliates clubs are within a four hour radius and their show schedule.



[NCHA Affiliates](#)

[ACHA Affiliates](#)

- ▶ Find other cutters in your area. Don't be afraid to reach out and make new friends. The cutting community is very family oriented and everyone has one thing in common, they LOVE cutting horses! The November edition of the NCHA Magazine, [The Chatta](#) lists all members and where they are based.



- ▶ Find out who the local trainers are within a four hour radius. Ask to visit and watch them work. Chat with them and see who you have a rapport with, who you feel comfortable asking questions and learning from and who's style/training program do you like or are drawn to? Make sure you have the same expectations (regarding time he/she can give, money, amount of practice you will commit to etc) and that the trainer understands your goals and can help you achieve them.

Just remember, the amount of earnings a trainer has won is not the main consideration when looking for a trainer. A trainer who has won a lot not may not necessarily be the best teacher for you. Just as a trainer who may not have won a lot, may be able to better explain cutting and have more time to coach you.

[NCHA Trainer Directory](#)

[ACHA Trainer Directory](#)

Working Out The Budget...

- ▶ Do you know how much you have to spend on cutting this year or how much it will cost? Work out your cutting budget for the year. It's easy to get excited after you purchase your horse or compete in your first show, but cutting can be expensive so it's important to be aware of all the costs you may face. Don't get ahead of yourself and think you need to spend more on a horse to do better at cutting. Make sure you start to win in the lower classes before advancing with horse power or higher classes.

CHTO has created a handy budget planner specifically for cutters to enter costs and events etc so you can track those expenses, help stay within your budget and avoid those blowouts that can happen when we get excited about the sport.

Cutting Shows

- ▶ Plan which shows you want to compete in.



[NCHA Aged Events Calendar](#)

[NCHA Weekend Events Calendar](#)



[ACHA Show Calendar](#)



Bits



There are many different bits used in cutting. It all depends on your horse and what he needs to help him be correct. It is important to speak with your trainer about this. Bits can be very harmful if you don't understand how to use them, why you use them, or are heavy handed on the reins. It is important to know what bits work with you AND your horse. The legendary Tom Dorrance was once asked, "which is the best bit to use?" He answered, "the one the horse likes most."

[Watch Ronnie Rice Talk About Bits](#)

[Todd Bergen Dispels Myths About Bits](#)

[Bit Maker Jim Edwards Explains Bits](#)

[Dennis Moreland Gives Tips About Bits And Spurs](#)

[Click Here to Access Your CHTO Budget Planner Tool](#)



Buying A Horse...

► Before you buy a horse ask to try it at home &/or with your trainer's help and show it in the \$2K limited Rider class. You can ride any horse in this class if you haven't won over \$2,000 in cutting. This class is cheaper than the others as they use re-run cattle. It's also the last class of the show, so it may be held late at night. But it's an excellent chance to try out a horse.

CHTO has put together a handy guide to help you find the ideal horse below.



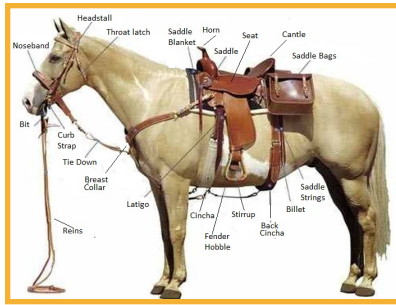
[15 Crucial Tips To Buying A Cutting Horse](#)

Let's Talk Tack...

► Get the right tack. Fitting a saddle to suit you personally is vital. As a beginner you may want to start with a *smaller* fit to minimize movement but be careful not to go too small! As your experience and riding improves you can change your saddle down the track. Ride as many saddles as you can to find what fits your riding ability. Your trainer will often have many you can use before you buy one. Ask an expert saddler about the type of seat you need for starting out in cutting.



[Click To Watch Master Saddler Calvin Allen share his advice on how to fit a saddle](#)



[Click HERE to get a recommended list of expert saddlers, tack and bit makers](#)

Training Tips...

- Get comfortable at neck reining. Practice neck reining at home in a herd of cows. If you don't have cows, simply weave your way around some drums or trees or obstacles. This will go a long way to assisting your cuts in the herd while showing.



[Watch Michael Cooper and Morgan Cromer explain the finer points of neck reining](#)

- Know how to lope your horse. It's always best to personally lope your horse for two reasons: it helps to improve your riding and secondly you get to know your horse and how much loping it needs. It's a mistake to underestimate the importance of loping and the difference it can make to your show success.

[Watch Miranda Westfall Explain How To Lope Your Horse](#)



[Click here to download a PDF on Loping Tips](#)

[Click Here to download PDF on Loping Etiquette](#)

Master Riding A Cutting Horse



Riding a cutting horse is different to riding other types of horses or competing in other disciplines. The key elements are learning to use your feet, legs, seat, horn, and balance yourself at the same time. Your hands on the reins play a minimal role in cutting. Remember, riding a cutter is very physical and competing in cutting makes you an athlete. It's important to think of yourself as such and prepare accordingly.

[Watch Chubby Turner's Video Explaining This](#)

A Little Motivation...



This is a shout out to Laura Collins taking notes on horseback at a Matt Gaines Clinic.

Laura is a great example of someone who is a student of the sport. She is constantly learning and practicing, asking questions, watching videos, (yes she is a member of CHTO) attending clinics and showing.



- Learn how to work your horse on the flag. This is not to “practice” cutting so much as it is to slow things down, get yourself and your horse comfortable in your stops, turns and being correct. Your trainer will be able to give you pointers on keeping your horse in tune.



[Watch Kathy Daugh explain the principles of working the flag.](#)

- Set up a practice area at home. You don’t need an arena. All budgets can erect a flag machine or make one from an exercise bike. Find a straight area 90 to 120 feet long. If you don’t have sand, just plough the soil and make sure it is soft enough for the horse to stop and turn without hurting itself.

Don’t let a tight budget rule you out of having a flag! Anyone can build their own, it’s quite simple.



[Read this guide CHTO has created on making your own flag machine](#)

Think You’re Ready?

Are you ready to head to a show?

- Make one last check through your trailer for bits, saddle, pad, chaps, wraps, a cooler sheet if needed, and water bucket. Make sure you have your hat and long sleeved shirt, you can’t show without them. Finally, do a safety check on your trailer, hookup, tires, your horse and how it’s tied up in

the trailer etc. Print out our equipment checklist below and put it in your trailer to make sure you are fully prepared.



[Click to get your Trailer and Equipment Checklist PDF](#)

And Finally....

- Know the clothing rules for competition, especially regarding all types of hoodies. This one has caught a few people out (especially when it is cold and they think no-one is really looking!) ([Page 133 of the NCHA Rule Book](#))
- For more information on getting started check out the [NCHA New Member's Booklet](#).
- Become a student of the sport! Study, watch videos, watch people showing, go to clinics, take notes, talk to people and ask questions. This may seem obvious but it can't be overstated enough.
[Login and Watch CHTO Now](#)

Best Of Luck!



[NCHA Rule Book](#)



[NCHA New Members](#)



[My CHTO Account Login](#)

Checklist for Beginners:

- Know the three most important showing rules
- Understand the Judge's card
- Know the objective of the sport (watch Gabe Reynold's video at least 2x)
- Know the NCHA Competition classes
- Joined your local cutting associations
- Know who and where are your local trainers
- Familiar with cutting terms
- Estimated costs/budget
- Tack sized and obtained (saddle, bridle, reins, cinch etc)
- Know clothing rules for showing
- Understand the key elements to riding a cutting horse
- Know the best bit for you and your horse
- Comfortable at neck reining
- Know how to lope your horse
- Understand what to do on the flag with your horse
- Have a practice area set up at home
- Watch videos, watch cuttings, ask questions!